



Research Capacity Program

Guidelines 2023-2024

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Research Capacity Program Guidelines 2023-2024 | Technology and Innovation

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1. Overview

The Research Capacity Program (RCP) is a competitive funding program designed to support the acquisition of small equipment and large research infrastructure to build research capacity in Alberta’s post-secondary institutions, and attract, retain, and develop researchers undertaking transformative and applied research programs.

The RCP strongly encourages the submission of applications that align with the Government of Alberta’s [Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy \(ATIS\)](#) and the applicant institution’s research priorities.

The RCP aligns with and complements the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) funding programs, and serves as Alberta’s only mechanism for leveraging CFI support. By employing a cost-sharing funding approach to provide up to 40% of the total eligible project costs for successful applications, the RCP enables applicants to leverage support from the CFI and other sources. To facilitate this cost-sharing approach, the RCP coordinates its competition streams and competitive cycles with the CFI, as shown below. The RCP competition stream descriptions and timelines are outlined in Section 7.

RCP COMPETITION STREAMS

RCP Stream:	College-Industry Innovation (CII)	Research Infrastructure (RI)	Small Equipment Grants (SEG)	Exceptional Opportunities (EO)
CFI Stream:	College Fund	Innovation Fund	John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF)	Exceptional Opportunities Fund
Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports applied research infrastructure in colleges and polytechnics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports large research infrastructure for research teams of up to 10 principle users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports research equipment for individual researchers or small teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designed to seize unique opportunities in innovation

2. Objectives

Program Intent

The intent of the RCP is to:



Achieving these objectives requires coordinated planning, strategic research investments, and the sustainable and effective use of resources.

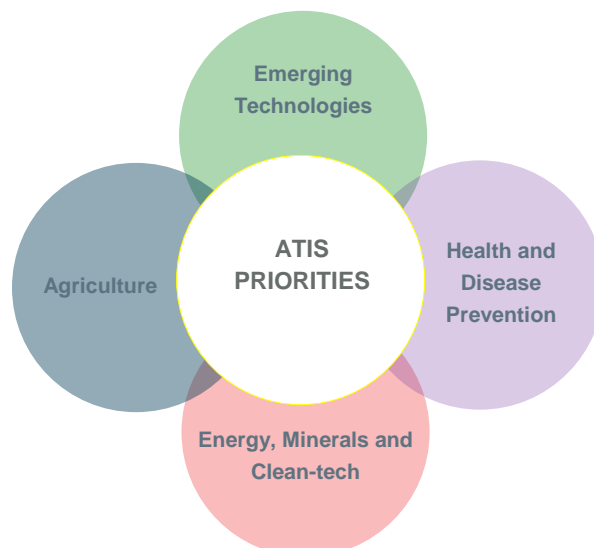
The RCP is focused on maintaining a strong base of research capacity by building, enhancing, and sustaining leading-edge research and innovation infrastructure that, in turn, supports the recruitment, retention, and development of skilled researchers. Research investments underpin Alberta’s academic and economic competitiveness by providing researchers the tools to generate new knowledge and to transform that knowledge into products, services, processes, and policies.

As such, the RCP places a high priority on innovative research and scientific excellence and, like the CFI, invests in infrastructure that will enable researchers, institutions, and their partners, to develop innovative research programs and in the case of colleges and technical institutes, support Alberta’s small and medium-sized business community.

Strategic Alignment

The RCP strongly encourages the submission of applications that align with the Government of Alberta’s [ATIS](#), which establishes the province’s research and innovation priorities. The program does not preclude the submission of applications from other areas of research, particularly those of international calibre or high impact; however, priority will be given to applications that support the ATIS.

ATIS PRIORITY AREAS



CFI Coordination

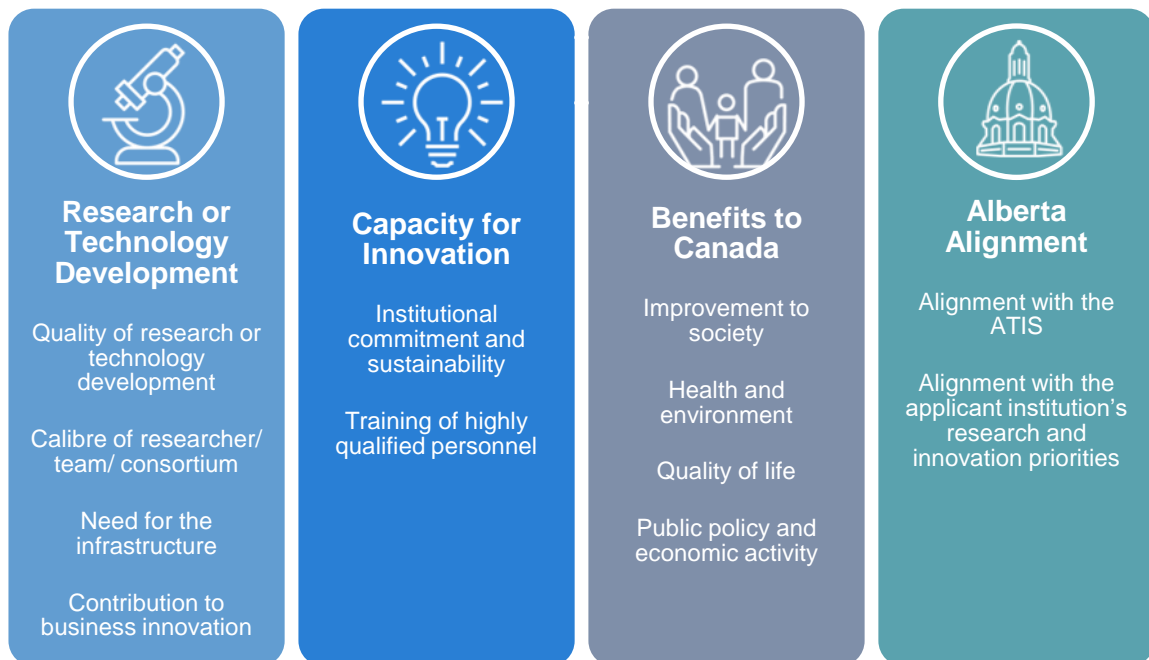
To maintain coordination with the CFI, the RCP guidelines are consistent with the [CFI Policy and Program Guide](#). Accordingly, all submissions must adhere to the *CFI Policy and Program Guide*. The RCP guidelines are thus intended to supplement the *CFI Policy and Program Guide* by articulating Alberta-specific requirements and processes associated with an RCP funding application.

Review Criteria

In coordination with the CFI, all requests for RCP funding are subject to a formal, independent, merit-based review. The review process will determine the relative merit of each application, with respect to the program criteria and the competitive context. Please refer to the CFI Policy and Program Guide for related details.

Notwithstanding coordination with and leverage of the CFI as a key program strategy, the RCP review and recommendation processes are conducted independently. The Minister of the administering department (“the Minister”) will make final funding decisions.

The RCP evaluates all applications using the following four key criteria that reflect the program’s mandate (the specific criteria vary within each stream):



Applications are encouraged to align with the outcomes stated in the ATIS and to support institutional research priorities of the applicant institution.

The proposed infrastructure is expected to (i) strengthen the province’s research capacity in its priority areas and/or have the potential to develop emerging capacity and capabilities of strategic importance; and (ii) support research excellence or an emerging area of research excellence in Alberta and attract and retain internationally recognized researchers.

The RCP endorses the CFI’s commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and requests that applicants accord with the CFI’s EDI requirements and suggestions, where applicable.

3. Eligibility

Eligible Institutions

The RCP adheres to the CFI's applicant eligibility guidelines. Accordingly, RCP streams are limited to institutions approved as CFI-eligible. Please refer to the *CFI Policy and Program Guide* for details.

ELIGIBILITY OF THE RCP STREAMS IN RELATION TO CFI

RCP Stream	Eligibility
College-Industry Innovation (CII)	Institutions that have established CFI eligibility for the College Fund
Research Infrastructure (RI)	Institutions that have established CFI eligibility for the Innovation Fund
Small Equipment Grants (SEG)	Institutions with CFI JELF allocations
Exceptional Opportunity (EO)	In accordance with CFI eligibility and/or as informed by the RCP

Project Costs

The RCP will provide support for up to 40% of the total eligible project costs of successful applications. Eligibility of project costs is consistent with those outlined in the [CFI Policy and Program Guide](#).

Partner Contributions

In order to be eligible for support, project proponents must have a plan in place for securing the balance of project costs from eligible funding sources. The RCP is aimed at leveraging those CFI awards that support Alberta priorities; thus, submission details provided to the RCP should be identical to the CFI.

Accordingly, the RCP considers the following as possible sources of partner contributions:

- Institutional funds (i.e. derived from applicant institution)
- Other Government of Alberta ministries
- Other government sources
- Alberta Innovates
- Business and industry
- Non-profit organizations
- Endowments
- User fees
- Licensing fees and royalties

To coordinate with the CFI, the RCP normally does **not** consider the following sources to be acceptable:

- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)
- Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
- Tri-council programs (e.g., Networks of Centres of Excellence and Canada Research Chairs)

Government of Alberta Infrastructure Contributions

In cases where Alberta Infrastructure capital funding sources are being used for equipment and/or infrastructure contributions, such sources, combined with the requested RCP contribution, should not exceed 40%.

4. Submissions

To streamline the application process, the RCP's four competition streams accepts submissions in the same format as those submitted to the corresponding CFI competition. **Applications must be submitted to the CFI and follow the CFI guidelines on eligibility, in-kind contributions, eligible expenditures, and funding partners.**

Submitting Notices of Intent (NOI)

To be able to submit to the RCP CII, RI, and BIG competition streams, the applicant's institution must first submit a notice of intent (NOI). An NOI submission is not required for SEG competition submissions. NOIs are not assessed as part of the merit-review process.

The NOI package must include the following:

1. A cover letter authorized by a designated institutional representative
2. A listing of the individual NOI submissions using the provided MS Excel template
3. PDF copies of each NOI submitted to the CFI

RCP uses an electronic secure transfer portal to support submissions and all submissions must be uploaded via this method. Institutions must contact the program area at rcp.program@gov.ab.ca **at least 2 weeks prior to the NOI submission deadline** to receive access to the portal. Stream specific submission deadlines are listed in Section 7..

Submitting Proposals

(The proposal should clearly present the project's merits and excellence. Provide enough information to enable reviewers to evaluate the proposal according to the assessment criteria and competition objectives. Do not include scanned copies of documents, other than signature pages.

The proposal package must include the following:

1. A cover letter authorized by a designated institutional representative
2. A listing the individual application submissions using the provided MS Excel template
3. PDF of each full application. Each PDF application must contain the following in order:
 - i. Alberta Alignment Module
 - ii. CFI Application
 - iii. Curriculum Vitae (where required by the CFI)

RCP uses an electronic secure transfer portal to support submissions and all submissions must be uploaded via this method. Institutions must contact the program area at rcp.program@gov.ab.ca **at least 2 weeks prior to the proposal submission deadline** to receive access to the portal. Stream specific submission deadlines are listed in Section 7.

If you must make changes to the team leaders or applicant institution after submitting a proposal, contact rcp.program@gov.ab.ca as soon as possible. This is to avoid introducing potential conflicts of interest with reviewers.

Stream-Specific Instructions

STREAM-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

RCP Stream	Instructions
College-Industry Innovation (CII)	Applicants must submit the NOI as per the CFI guidelines and include RCP specific requirements to support proposal submissions, which includes a one-page Alberta Alignment Module.
Research Infrastructure (RI)	<p>Applicants must submit the NOI as per the CFI guidelines and include RCP specific requirements to support proposal submissions.</p> <p>Proponents may submit an Alberta Alignment Module of up to <u>two pages</u> if they are preparing a multi-institutional project which is either Alberta-led, or for which an Alberta post-secondary institution is a participant in a project led by another institution. The additional page enables proponents to identify which infrastructure and/or capability will be acquired in Alberta, the impact in the province, and a rationale for the requested provincial contribution.</p>
Small Equipment Grants (SEG)	<p>Applicants must include RCP specific requirements to support proposal submissions, which includes a one-page Alberta Alignment Module.</p> <p>If the SEG application is in conjunction with a JELF Partnership application, applicants must also attach a copy of the partnering application and submit the corresponding expert review reports when available. Applicants must submit the associated partnership reviews concurrently with the application or shortly thereafter to be eligible for any given competition intake.</p>
Exceptional Opportunity (EO)	Applicants must submit the NOI as per the CFI guidelines and include RCP specific requirements to support submissions. Proponents must also submit the corresponding expert review reports where available.

5. Review Process

The RCP employs an independent Multidisciplinary Review Panel comprised of academic and research experts from across Canada with senior research and administrative experience. Panel members are chosen based on their research record, area of expertise, senior leadership and knowledge of the research funding environment, and for their collective ability to bring multidisciplinary expertise to the review process.

The RCP does not disclose the identities of its Multidisciplinary Review Panel members to ensure their objectivity and impartiality. RCP may provide anonymized reviewer feedback to institutions, at its discretion.

The review process encompasses three stages:



The applications undergo review using the objectives and criteria identified in Review Criteria described under Section 2.

The panel uses the program guidelines and criteria to review all applications, taking into account the CFI and/or partnering agency expert reviews, and assessing the alignment of applications with Alberta's research and innovation priorities and the research priorities expressed by the applicant institutions.

The panel deliberations result in a set of recommendations, which are provided to the Minister to inform final decisions.

6. Accountability and Reporting Requirements

Accountability Requirements

Finalization of Awards

Funding for successful applications will be conditional on securing the balance of project funding from eligible partners and submitting the CFI's award finalization documentation. Institutions should engage the RCP if challenges arise associated with the identified timeframe.

Grant Agreement

The grant agreement developed for awarded projects will outline the terms and conditions of support and must be signed by both parties (institutional representative and Government of Alberta representative) prior to the release of payment. As per Government of Alberta policy, e-signatures will be utilized using the Government of Alberta's approved platform.

As a part of this agreement, institutions will be required to regularly report on the financial status of projects and on the outcomes achieved. The schedule and reporting requirements will be outlined in the agreement. Any significant variations in project scope or other requirements of the grant agreement must be agreed upon by both parties.

Amending a Project

Institutions must submit written project change requests to rcp.program@gov.ab.ca. Inclusion of the following information in the amendment request will support the review process:

- Email Subject Line: RCP project number and type of request (e.g. Amendment)
- Project identification:
 - RCP project number
 - CFI project number
 - Project title
 - RCP principle investigator
- Identification and description of the change request
- A written rationale for the change, describing the importance AND the impact of the requested change on project delivery and objectives
- Documentation to support federal engagement and approval (screenshot of approval within CAMS is sufficient)

All change requests must be submitted **3 months** prior to the due date of the next report or the project completion date outlined in the grant agreement. This applies to changes to the project, extensions, and exemptions. Failure to do so could impact approval of the request.

Retaining Residual Funds

We require a written request to retain residual funds in advance of expenditures via submission to rcp.program@gov.ab.ca. Inclusion of the following information in the request will support the review process:

- Email Subject Line: RCP project number and type of request (e.g. Retaining residual funds)
- Project identification:
 - RCP project number
 - CFI project number
 - Project title
 - RCP principle investigator
- An explanation of how the residual funds were realized
- A plan to spend the funds

This request must come **in advance of the grant agreement term date expiration**. Expenditures must relate to the enhancement or advancement of the original scope of the application, and may include capital or operating expenses. Financial reporting will be required (for residual equal to or exceeding \$1,000) and timelines will be established in the approval

notice. In order to process requests effectively it is recommended that in cases where institutions have multiple project requests/queries, one email be submitted per project.

Reporting Requirements

The RCP generally adheres to CFI’s pre- and post-award guidelines. However, any variations requiring CFI review and approval also require RCP review and approval.

RCP requires the submission of formal written requests (one project per submission) for any changes to projects that do not fall within the parameters of RCP and/or CFI Guidelines. If the institution is unable, for any reason, to complete a project or is unable to comply with grant agreement conditions/requirements (e.g. delays, report exemptions, no expenditures to report, etc.), the institution should notify the RCP **3 months in advance**. RCP will assess any such requests on a case-by-case basis. We also require a copy of the CFI’s approval (an email or screenshot from CAMS).

For RCP-CFI cost-shared projects, in lieu of the RCP Financial Report, submit the following:

1. **Interim/Annual Financial Report** – an electronic copy of the CFI approved interim financial report, plus an itemized listing and description of actual and total expenditures to March 31 of the reporting year
2. **Final Financial Report** – an electronic copy of CFI approved final financial report (a screenshot of CAMS’ approval is acceptable)

FINANCIAL AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting Requirements	Deadline
Copy of the CFI Award Finalization documents (CFI signed Award Agreement & Finalization Award Form, etc.)	On or before 1 year after project funding was awarded
<p>Any change requests must be submitted to the RCP at the same time a CFI request is submitted. All applicable documentation including the CFI’s approval must be provided once obtained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Institutions must notify the RCP if additional time is required at least 3 months before the due date. 	
<p>Annual/Interim Financial Report</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of CFI approved report in lieu of the RCP Financial Report is acceptable 2. Itemized list of actual expenditures to reporting period 	<p>For all CII, RI, and EO funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yearly by September 15 for actual expenditures to March 31 (cumulative) <p>For SEG funding of \$1,000,000 or more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yearly by September 15 for actual expenditures to March 31 (cumulative) <p>For SEG funding of less than \$1,000,000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Every two years by September 15 for actual expenditures to March 31 (cumulative)
<p>Final Financial Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A copy of the CFI approved report in lieu of the RCP Financial Report is acceptable 	Due within six months of project completion date confirming actual eligible costs and contributions for the project
Outcomes Report	Due within one year of the project completion date
Second Outcomes Report	Due five years after the project completion date

7. Competition Streams

College-Industry Innovation (CII)

The CII stream will enhance the capacity of colleges/technical institutes by providing state-of-the-art research infrastructure to carry out applied research and technology development across all disciplines and foster partnerships in strategic priority areas with the private, public and non-profit sectors. Applicants are encouraged to align their applications with areas of strategic priority to the institution and the province’s priorities in the context of the ATIS. Institutions must demonstrate how the research will contribute to program delivery and student engagement. The innovation generated through these partnerships must address the social, business, health and/or environmental needs of an Albertan industry or community and is expected to lead to the creation or adaptation of knowledge and technology, or improve a product, process or service.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible colleges/technical institutes may request up to \$1 million per application in funding support from the CII stream. Applicants must be CFI-eligible/funded under the CFI College Fund. The expected request from the RCP should be included when submitting a Notice of Intent (NOI). If an application is declined by the CFI, it will be removed from the CII competition.

Application Deadlines

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2023 TIMELINES

Item	Date
NOI Deadline	May 19, 2023
Application Deadline	July 14, 2023
Decisions	Spring 2024

All submissions must be **submitted to the secure portal by 4:30 PM MST** on the deadline date. Institutions must contact the program area at rcp.program@gov.ab.ca **at least 2 weeks prior** to the listed deadlines to receive access to the portal.

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Research Infrastructure (RI)

The RI stream coordinates with the CFI's Innovation Fund to invest in transformative research infrastructure projects of strategic significance to the institutions and the province's priorities in the context of the ATIS. These projects will secure and strengthen Alberta's competitive position in research and technology development.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible institutions are expected to submit only projects of exceptional quality that will support promising and innovative research or technology development in areas where Alberta currently is, or has the potential to be, competitive on the global stage. The RCP will support initiatives that allow institutions and their researchers to build on and enhance an emerging strategic priority area, accelerate current research and technology development work, and/or take established capabilities to a globally competitive level.

Institutions are encouraged to increase their application's competitiveness through collaboration with appropriate partners and to plan cooperatively to acquire, develop, utilize, operate, and maintain infrastructure. Institutions are encouraged to engage with end-users of the research or technology to clearly define the potential benefits for Albertans.

Application Deadlines

2023 TIMELINES

Item	Date
NOI Deadline	June 17, 2022
Application Deadline	August 31, 2022
Decisions	Fall 2023

All submissions must be **submitted to the secure portal by 4:30 PM MST** on the deadline date. Institutions must contact the program area at rcp.program@gov.ab ca **at least 2 weeks prior** to the listed deadlines to receive access to the portal.

Small Equipment Grants (SEG)

The SEG stream is intended to help Alberta institutions attract and retain outstanding talent in the context of significant international competition. The SEG stream will support leading-edge research infrastructure that will enable talented faculty to undertake innovative research programs. Applications are encouraged to align with provincial priorities in the context of the ATIS and address strategic infrastructure needs related to maintaining or enhancing the competitiveness of the proponent's and institution's research programs.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants include institutions that have a CFI JELF allocation. Submissions are restricted to applications that have either garnered a JELF award in the October 2022 or February 2023 JELF competitions, or applications that have submitted to the June 2023 JELF competition. However, if an application is declined at the CFI, it will be removed from the SEG competition.

In addition, any CFI requests associated with JELF partnerships (joint process that has been developed with the CRCs, NSERC, and SSHRC), for which a decision is expected at or prior to the November 2023 CFI Board meeting, are eligible. Applicants must notify the RCP as to when they expect to receive the associated partnership reviews.

If an institution submits a JELF partnership application, it is expected to provide the associated partnering agency application and expert review materials.

Up to three candidates may apply together for one SEG award, but all co-applicants must be eligible candidates.

Application Deadlines

2023 TIMELINES

Item	Date
NOI Deadline	N/A
Application Deadline	October 23, 2023
Decisions	Spring 2024

All submissions must be **submitted to the secure portal by 4:30 PM MST** on the deadline date. Institutions must contact the program area at rca.program@gov.ab ca **at least 2 weeks prior** to the listed deadlines to receive access to the portal.

Exceptional Opportunity – Bio Innovation Grant (BIG)

The BIG coordinates with CFI's Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund (BRIF) competition to help Alberta institutions maintain cutting-edge facilities, and strengthen their capacity to advance promising industry-relevant discoveries, promote training, and develop talent in the field of biosciences.

This BIG competition is tied to the CFI's BRIF – Partnership with Stage 2 of the Canada Biomedical Research Fund (CBRF – BRIF Stage 2). Eligible institutions may submit partnered proposals for high risk and applied research, talent development and research infrastructure funding. Each proposal must be aligned with one of the hubs' priorities, vision, program of research, support pandemic preparedness and respond to emerging health threats. Applications are encouraged to align with provincial priorities in the context of the ATIS and address strategic infrastructure that will enhance the competitiveness of the province.

Please submit the Notice of Intent submitted to CFI BRIF – Stage 2 for this competition (refer to Section 4 for details).

Applicant Eligibility

Submissions are restricted to applications that have submitted to the CFI BRIF – Stage 2 competition. However, if an application is declined at the CFI, it will be removed from the RCP's BIG competition.

Application Deadlines

2023 TIMELINES

Item	Date
NOI Deadline	June 15, 2023
Application Deadline	September 14, 2023
Decisions	Summer 2024

All submissions must be **submitted to the secure portal by 4:30 PM MST** on the deadline date. Institutions must contact the program area at rca.program@gov.ab.ca **at least 2 weeks prior** to the listed deadlines to receive access to the portal.

8. Communications

To measure and promote the impact of the research enabled by RCP funding contributions, the RCP expects that institutions, communications staff, and project leaders acknowledge Government of Alberta support in all public communications activities and products, including institutional and scholarly publications, presentations, media relations, and facility or lab openings. The official Government of Alberta logo is an appropriate identifier for acknowledging RCP contributions. Please contact the RCP for further assistance.

The RCP will engage with researchers and communications teams should a research project or lab be chosen for any departmental communications product. Information provided to the RCP within the brief plain-language summary in the application and the outcomes reports of awarded projects will provide the RCP's team with additional ideas for the development of features for use in a range of RCP outreach products.

Applicants are required to keep their funding results under information embargo until they are officially announced by the department or advised otherwise.

9. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Information gathered in the application are collected under the authority of the minister of administering department in accordance with section 33(c) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP). It will be used in assessing applications to the RCP. The information contained in the applications is subject to the disclosure and privacy provisions of FOIP. For further information, please contact:

Research Capacity Program Manager
rcp.program@gov.ab.ca

10. Contact Information

CONTACT INFORMATION

Activity	Submission Method
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General inquires• Financial reporting• Outcomes reporting• Amendment and residual fund requests	Research Capacity Program Manager rcp.program@gov.ab.ca
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Application submissions• Grant agreement execution	Secure Portal <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Email rcp.program@gov.ab.ca to receive a link, then upload your submission to the site. Do not email documents with private and confidential information
